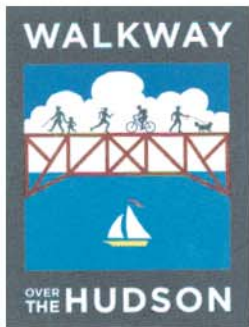




EXPLORE **NY**  
HUDSON • FULTON • CHAMPLAIN  
**SIGNATURE  
EVENT**

## Walking on Air

The Grand Opening of  
Walkway Over the Hudson  
October 2, 3 & 4, 2009



Jeanne Fleming,  
Artistic & Producing  
Director

845. 758. 5519  
[openingcelebration@  
walkway.org](mailto:openingcelebration@walkway.org)

118 La Bergerie Lane  
Red Hook, NY 12571

## Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebration

*WALKING ON AIR: The Grand Opening of Walkway Over the Hudson*

### *Tying the Knot*

*The Official Opening Ceremony of the Walkway over the Hudson will be marked by the simplest of rituals: the tying of a knot.*

Two traditional manila nautical ropes – decorated with hand-printed flags created by children, elders, artists, and residents of the 50 towns of the mid-Hudson Valley – will be drawn toward the center of the bridge, one from each side of the River. At the central meeting point, The Hon. Governor David Paterson and his wife Michelle Paterson, Honorary Chair of the Quadricentennial, will “tie the knot” connecting pedestrian communities from both sides of the Hudson, for the first time.

The inspiration and symbolism for this act comes directly from the State Seal of New York. Between the figures of Liberty and Justice is stretched a rope, across a scene of the Hudson River, which depicts two ships, one an oceangoing vessel and the other a freshwater sailboat. The two crafts, one global and the other local, capture the essential history of New York as a State built on the dual foundations of international commerce and local community, a meeting point of cultures, heritages, and even ecosystems (reflected in the Hudson’s unique status as an estuary, in which the saltwater of the ocean extends, aptly, as far upriver as the Poughkeepsie Bridge).

The traditional nautical ropes will each be approximately 3000 feet long, covering the full span of the bridge. 1,000 volunteers, spaced at regular intervals, will be required to extend the ropes to their full extent at their meeting point. The design and creation of the flags will be overseen by working artists from the 50 communities, who will act as educators and storytellers, drawing initial inspiration from the original Dutch banners of the Half-Moon, and more broadly, from the history of the Hudson Valley in general. They will guide local residents to fashion distinctly individual local flags to add to the collective rope.

The tying of a rope is an open and easily understood symbolic gesture, an act of joining together (East and West, European and Indigenous, Industry and Agriculture, past and present, etc.) at a particular moment in our history when joining together is more important than ever. It also evokes the spirit of our perilous times, walking a tight-rope high above the Hudson, taking precise and courageous steps toward the future. Once the knot is tied, the Governor and his wife will continue their walks across the bridge. A ribbon will be tied across the East and West Entrances to the bridge behind which will be the Walking on Air Parade. The two officials will cut those ribbons to “open” the bridge to the general public who will come across the bridge in two processions led by visual elements reflecting the history, ecology, and culture of the Hudson River. The Procession will travel in opposite directions on either side of the joined rope, inaugurating in spectacular form, the first pedestrian footsteps on the Walkway Over the Hudson.

Representatives of all 50 Towns on both sides of the River will join the Governor and his wife in a tableau at the center point of the bridge bearing pageant sized Medallions of their Town Seals. They will be joined by representatives from National, Regional, State, and County Governments, as well as foreign visitors, including the the Crown Prince of the Netherlands and the Mayors of Dutch villages with corresponding Hudson Valley names. The procession will be led by local youth musical groups and be open to the Press.